

Master World-Building Cheat Sheet



Here are seven key take-aways from this course:

1. The “world” of your story can be as small as a closet or vast as the multiverse. Whatever its size it must be authentic, richly detailed, and uniquely your own.
2. Consider how your story is set in the mind of your reader. We come to different genres – horror, Western, romance – in different states of mind. Knowing your genre will help you select locations that best fit your story.
3. Max out all five senses. If you think of any book or film you love, you can recall the feel of characters’ clothing, the décor of rooms, the architecture, land and seascapes, the taste and smell of food, the sounds in the air.
4. In chapter 20 of your textbook, *Link inextricably to your setting*, you’ll find eleven items to consider to develop your world. When you fully develop your world, it helps you shape your characters’ attitudes, generate story ideas, deepen themes, and enrich the experience. Even if details are not directly included in the script, they seep into every facet adding nuance and texture.
5. Your world is successful if it is so intricately developed your characters could not come from any other place without being irrevocably changed. And characters who are not from it feel alien.
6. Even if your story is set in a real location, it’s not that location. It’s *your* take on it. James Baldwin, Woody Allen, and Martin Scorsese all set stories in New York City. But each had their unique tone, style, and vision of the city.
7. Keep a running list of all your locations and make sure that each adds something unique. Together, they should feel like a unified set, like an orchestra. There are many instruments but all work together to strengthen the impact of your story. Consider a Western that features a saloon, main street, barber shop, gun shop, hotel, town hall, church, and general store. These locations belong together. Make each one count.

